

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6086

E. O. 11652C GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ECON, AR

SUBJECT: FORMER MINISTER OF INTERIOR NOT OPTIMISTIC

REF: BUENOS AIRES 5865

1. FORMER MINISTER OF INTERIOR ALBERTO ROCAMORA TOLD AMBASSADOR HILL AT LUNCHEON SEPTEMBER 9 THAT ECONOMY MINISTER CAFIERO WOULD, UPON RETURNING TO ARGENTINA, INFORM CABINET AND PRESIDENT PERON THAT UNLESS ARGENTINA TOOK POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES ADEQUATE TO MEET CURRENT CRISIS HE, CAFIERO, WOULD RESIGN FROM CABINET. ACCORDING TO ROCAMORA, CAFIERO HAD BEEN APPALLED BY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ARGENTINA WHICH UNDERScoreD COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONAL INSTABILITY WHILE HE WAS ABROAD ATTEMPTING TO NEGOTIATE ARGENTINE DEBT WITH USG AND PRIVATE AMERICAN BANKS. ROCAMORA EMPHASIZED THAT CAFIERO WOULD NOT MAKE GRANDSTAND PLAY IN THREATENING RESIGNATION. RATHER, HE WOULD POINT OUT TO CABINET AND MRS. PERON THAT UNLESS GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONED AS A COHERENT BODY THAT COULD SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, HE WOULD NOT AGAIN PUT PERSONAL PRESTIGE ON LINE WITH PRIVATE FOREIGN BANKS, USG AND INTERNATIONAL LENDING INSTITUTIONS.

2. CAFIERO, ACCORDING TO ROCAMORA, IS A RELATIVELY YOUNG, AMBITIOUS AND TALENTED ECONOMIST WHO UNDERTOOK PRESENT VERY DIFFICULT TASK BECAUSE HE REALIZED THAT SUCCESS IN GETTING ARGENTINA OVER ITS ECONOMIC CRISIS COULD LEAD HIM TO THE PRESIDENCY IN '77. ROCAMORA ADDED THAT CAFIERO HAD ALL THE INGREDI-
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ENTS REQUIRED TO MAKE HIM A SUCCESSFUL PRESIDENT WITH PERHAPS

THE EXCEPTION OF "POLITICAL TOUCH," WHICH HE COULD SOON ACQUIRE IN HIS PRESENT POSITION. GIVEN FACT THAT CAFIERO HARBORS PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS, ROCAMORA FELT IT "LOGICAL" THAT HE WOULD NOT RISK HIS FUTURE BY STAYING ON WITHOUT COHERENT CABINET TO BACK HIS EFFORTS IN ECONOMIC AREA.

3. ROCAMORA STATED THAT WHILE CAFIERO OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE GREAT IMMEDIATE RESULTS FROM U.S. TRIP, HE HAD MADE A START ON DEALING WITH PROBLEMS AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF DECLINE--BUT ONLY A START. FURTHER, ACCORDING TO ROCAMORA, U.S. HAD SHOWN BY ITS TREATMENT OF CAFIERO THAT IT WAS WILLING TO DEAL WITH GOA IN MOST FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE FASHION. IF CAFIERO AND OTHER PARTY FIGURES COULD NOW FORM CABINET WHICH COULD DEAL WITH COUNTRY'S ILLS IN INTELLIGENT MANNER, U.S. WILLINGNESS TO HELP WOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO PRODUCTIVE AND COOPERATIVE VENTURE. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, GOA AND PERONISTS CONTINUED FRACTIOUS BEHAVIOR AND CONTINUED APPLYING PATCHWORK SOLUTIONS TO FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS, THEN ARGENTINES WOULD HAVE ONLY THEMSELVES TO BLAME FOR RESULTING FAILURE.

4. ROCAMORA AND AMERICO GROSSMAN, A PROMINENT PERONIST POLITICIAN WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, BOTH ADDED THAT MRS. PERON WOULD ANNOUNCE ON THURSDAY THAT SHE WAS TAKING A 30-DAY LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHIN ARGENTINA. BEFORE TAKING LEAVE, THEY SAID, SHE WOULD REQUEST LUDER, WHO WOULD FILL IN FOR HER, THAT NO CABINET CHANGES BE MADE DURING HER ABSENCE. BOTH ROCAMORA AND GROSSMAN BELIEVED THIS IMPLICIT DELAY WAS UNFORTUNATE SINCE SITUATION IN COUNTRY REQUIRED CABINET CHANGES NOW, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF DISUNITY WITHIN PRESENT CABINET. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, THEY SAID, CHANGES WOULD HAVE TO COME WHETHER SHE LIKED IT OR NOT; SHE WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO ACCEPT THEM. BOTH ALSO GAVE IMPRESSION THAT IF NECESSARY SHE COULD NOW LEAVE POLITICAL SCENE PERMANENTLY WITHOUT CREATING GREAT PROBLEMS FOR COUNTRY. THEY FURTHER EMPHASIZED FACT THAT REPORTS ABOUT HER SEEKING LEAVE OF ABSENCE WHICH WERE PUBLICIZED DAYS AFTER CAFIERO DEPARTED FOR U.S. (AND WHICH THEY SAID WERE TRUE) HAD HARMED PROSPECTS FOR HIS SUCCESS. THEY ATTRIBUTED FACT THAT REPORTS HAD BEEN LEAKED AT SUCH CRUCIAL MOMENT TO LACK OF COORDINATION AND POLITICAL COHERENCE WITHIN PRESENT CABINET.

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5. ROCAMORA APPEARS TO ADMIRE CAFIERO AND WISH HIM WELL. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, EXPRESS FIRM CONFIDENCE WITH RESPECT TO FUTURE. NOW THAT HE IS NO LONGER MINISTER, HE SAID, HE CAN SPEAK MORE FREELY--AT LEAST AMONG FRIENDS. HE FRANKLY ADMITTED THAT THERE IS POWER VACUUM AT CENTER OF GOVERNMENT WHICH MRS. PERON CANNOT POSSIBLY FILL. SHE WOULD DO BETTER, HE SAID, TO RESTRICT HERSELF TO ATTENDING PROTOCOLARY FUNCTIONS AND SIGNING PAPERS, LEAVING ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT TO OTHERS.

ROCAMORA EMPHASIZED THAT UNLESS STRONG, COHERENT CABINET ORGANIZED SOON TO FILL VACUUM, COUNTRY WOULD BEGIN RAPID DECLINE. AND HE WAS NOT SANGUINE REGARDING POSSIBILITIES THAT SUCH CABINET WOULD BE FORMED.

6. COMMENT: PRESS REPORTS FROM CARACAS INDICATING CAFIERO THERE ADMITTED POSSIBLY OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS UNLESS URGENT POLITICAL MEASURES TAKEN TO BRING INTERNAL ORDER WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM VIEW OF HIS POSITION EXPRESSED BY ROCAMORA. WHETHER OR NOT MRS. PERON WILL TAKE LEAVE TOMORROW REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THERE ARE OTHER RELIABLE REPORTS THAT SHE WILL. HOWEVER, AS INDICATED IN BA 5865, THIS IS NO LONGER A MAJOR ISSUE. WHETHER SHE GOES OR NOT, POWER HAS PASSED HER BY. HILL

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